



Duval County Public Schools

January 12, 2016, Board Workshop

Ms. Ashley Smith Juarez, Chairman
Ms. Paula D. Wright, Vice-Chairman
Ms. Becki Couch
Mr. Jason Fischer
Ms. Cheryl Grymes
Dr. Constance S. Hall
Mr. Scott Shine
Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent

ATTENDANCE AT THIS MEETING OF THE DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD: All Board Members were present. Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent, and Ms. Karen Chastain, Chief Officer of Legal Services, were also present.

Call Meeting To Order

[CALL MEETING TO ORDER](#)

Minutes: The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m.

Items To Be Discussed

[LEGISLATIVE ENGAGEMENT](#)

Minutes:

Susie Wiles and Carol Bracy of Ballard Partners, Inc. gave a brief presentation to the Board providing background information about their company. Ms. Wiles has been in and out of government work in this area for the past 25 years and Ms. Bracy joined the firm in 2007. The firm has

seven offices throughout Florida.

Ms. Bracy emphasized the importance of the working relationship and methods of communication between the firm and their clients so the firm can understand the clients' needs and the clients can understand the firm's feedback.

Board Member Couch gave the women background information of what she and Vice-Chairman Paula Wright will be doing while they are in Tallahassee for the Annual Day in the Legislature.

Ms. Bracy indicated there are typically over 200 bills that start through the legislative process and as they follow those, they will need to know who the point of contact is both with the office and associations. The Chairman indicated Nena Sparrow, Administrative Assistant to the School Board, can be the point of contact for the office as updates are received. Board Member Hall noted that when session moves, things happen quickly and a weekly update may contain information that is old; more frequent updates may be needed during fast-paced times. The Chairman noted we would want to be informed on education issues, not only on our own agenda, but also with items outside of our agenda. Vice-Chairman Wright is also interested in working with Ballard Partners to coordinate the local agenda with the national agenda. Ruth Melton with Florida School Board Association (FSBA) would be a great contact for that.

Ms. Wiles explained she, along with Ed Newberry, would be working with the Board on things at the federal level. Board Member Shine noted that last year, we had problems with the Governor vetoing issues that the Duval Delegation had worked on. He also would like to see not only bills we support going through, but also adversarial bills be blocked from the agenda. Ms. Bracy explained the preliminary work they do with the budget staff at the Governor's level before the budget is built and appropriations are set. Much of that work occurs outside the dates of session. Ms. Bracy agreed that the best time to have joint meetings/workshops is annually prior to session beginning. Learning about educational issues in and of itself is very challenging. They work with both current and incoming leadership and their staff in the House and Senate.

GOVERNANCE

Minutes:

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS CASE

Vice-Chairman Wright asked Dr. Vitti to expound on the hiring of two attorneys to work with the district's response to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR). Dr. Vitti said given the national presence that comes with the OCR case, the added expertise would help with responding adequately. The addition of Brenda Priestly Jackson and her historical perspective along with past Board experience she could bring to the case would strengthen

their position. Vice-Chairman Wright noted she would have appreciated a call as to why the district decided to hire additional counsel.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Vice-Chairman Wright also expressed dismay over not receiving much lead time prior to the press conference held on school graduation rates. She did not see the email until after the press conference was over. Dr. Vitti said the release of grades caught everyone by surprise and created a time crunch in trying to get a press conference underway by media deadlines. The next time they will call the Board office rather than rely on email. Board Member Hall asked about the press release protocol that is used. Dr. Vitti said the releases sent to the media has the topic and very few details so the media will need to attend to get more in-depth information. After the press conference, a more detailed release is sent to them. It's in the best interest of the district to do the press conference quickly so the analysis comes from the district rather than some other source. There was discussion about using text messaging to Board Members whenever there is anything of an urgent matter. Since some don't like using their personal phones for business, Dr. Vitti will determine who wants the urgent texts and who doesn't.

GROUP TEXT MESSAGES

Chairman Smith Juarez asked Board Members to let the office know who would like to be included in group text messages for urgent messages. Board Members Fischer and Shine both indicated they did not want to be a part of that group. Chairman Smith Juarez said anytime they can be notified of information, be it proposed or solid, then the sooner, the better. Board Member Couch reminded everyone that this topic has been discussed multiple times in the past, that we now have three secretaries and an internal auditor that can help get the word out and it shouldn't be an issue getting notifications out to Board Members quickly. She was dismayed to see Facebook posts that indicated Board Members weren't supportive since some weren't there. That shouldn't be happening since the topic has been discussed before.

DISTRICT CELL PHONES

Board Member Shine would like for the Board to make it a policy for cell phones to be issued to all Board Members so that all Board business, including text messages, are contained within the same phone and no record outside of that phone is created. Stipends were discussed in lieu of district-issued cell phones, which would have to be reported as income. The district did away with stipends during budget cuts several years back. Board Member Fischer doesn't feel Board Members should receive a stipend benefit but also does not want to receive written Board business on his personal cell; he would prefer either a call or email.

Board Member Couch reminded everyone that state statute determines the maximum amount for Board Member salaries, so a stipend could not be added on top of that number. A separate phone issued to Board Members

would be the way to do it, much like a laptop or iPad is issued to members as a device to help them do their work.

Board Member Grymes thinks the issuance of a separate phone to Board Members is more of a benefit to the constituents than to the Board Members and would make the process of doing Board business a cleaner process. Ms. Chastain said the phone would also be backed up by the server which is where someone filling a public records request would go to pull information.

Board Member Shine opined it should be determined by policy voted on by the Board; Board Member Grymes thinks it could be kept simple by letting each Board Member indicate if they want the additional phone or not. Board Member Couch informed everyone there is an app that can be purchased that will transfer your text messages into cloud storage so it doesn't build up on your personal phone. Vice-Chairman Wright appreciates Board Member Shine making the suggestion of having a separate phone for Board business and supports the idea.

Board Member Couch noted to the Board that during the Ethics training, it was clarified to everyone that as elected officials, they are responsible for keeping copies of all written records of board business whether it is in the form of documents, printed communication, or social media posts. The Board may want to designate a location for storing those items like they do for documents now.

UNIFORM POLICY

Dr. Vitti updated the Board on where the district was at that point on the uniform policy feedback. A survey on the website as well as PTAs and SACs are being used to collect feedback on the proposed policy. The feedback would be compiled and brought to the Board for workshop in February. In addition to feedback from schools without a uniform, the Board also wants to see how uniforms are working in schools where there is a policy in place to use them as well as research that has been done; how has it affected the school climate, behavior and academics. Potential downfalls were discussed that were encountered the last time the district attempted to instill a uniform policy. The importance of thinking through the logistics was also stressed if the Board decides to go forward with the policy. Vice-Chairman Wright noted the interview on the topic she saw Dr. Vitti do during the holiday break caught her by surprise and would like to do better on communication.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT MEETING

Board Member Couch informed everyone that the Board Development meeting scheduled for March 8 would include the findings of the self-evaluations that everyone, including Dr. Vitti, is to do ahead of time and send to Dr. Minberg. The Board discussed timelines for both the Board self-evaluation and the Superintendent's evaluation, the contractor being used and instrument being used. Board Member Shine would like to see both the Board and Superintendent held to the same standards and more

initiative on the part of the Board to get projects done in a more timely way.

BUDGET

Chairman Smith Juarez updated everyone on ground work discussions she has had with the Superintendent on the budget. The budget time-line through the spring would be as follows:

- February – the Board discusses budget priorities
- March – Dr. Vitti brings the school-based budgets before the Board to discuss
- April – Dr. Vitti brings the district budget before the Board to discuss
- May – the Board will finalize the budget

CURRICULUM

Board Member Fischer informed the Board that the EngageNY curriculum continues to be one of frustration among his constituents and he is not supportive of it. He is aware of parents pulling their children out of our schools and putting them elsewhere due to it. Chairman Smith Juarez mentioned that we can have a firm do a curriculum audit that was suggested during the last Board Development session and the Board may want to decide to move forward with that. Board Member Fischer thinks there may be a professor at Jacksonville University that can also do the audit; he will look into it. Dr. Vitti suggested if another audit of the curriculum is done, that they ensure it be done in a way that does not replicate what has already been done or they would end up with the same information that they already know. Chairman Smith Juarez suggested two or three Board Members sit on a committee to guide the audit process. Board Member Couch noted that curriculum needs to be in place and ready to go by April. She, along with Board Members Fischer and Hall, agreed to do the review. Dr. Vitti noted there has been concern with flexibility and moving to a performance-based scenario with flexibility.

WORKING GROUP MEETING

Board Member Couch explained to the Board that the upcoming working group meeting at Ed White would be the first of many working group meetings. The Board established the format that would be used for addressing people's questions and concerns:

- Cards are given out for people to write their questions on and then grouped by category
- Board Member welcomes everyone
- Dr. Vitti reviews the recommendation
- Names and questions are read that are in each group of cards, then questions are answered
- Time is given after each answer for people to come to the microphone for clarification/comment with a time limit given

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Board Member Shine asked for an update on the social media policy for the Board. Chairman Smith Juarez informed everyone that the Policy Review Committee voted unanimously to incorporate case law and that stipulations around First Amendment rights would be incorporated into employee training and policy handbook. The Committee didn't think a policy should be put in place. There is always the employee's First Amendment right vs. an employer's management rights issue. Board Member Shine has reservations about how the Board goes about making its decisions. He proposed that any new policy discussed must have a first reading at Board meetings or as a committee.

STUDENT EXPULSION HEARINGS

Board Member Shine also discussed the changes he'd like to propose for expulsion hearings. If students and their parents don't contest the expulsion, it would go onto the Consent Agenda.

Board Member Couch mentioned that other districts have done a similar practice with their expulsions but employ a magistrate-type position that is a third party. Ms. Chastain will look into the possible change in more detail. Board Member Couch would like to see what surrounding counties are doing since Duval receives many of their expulsions into our system.

Dr. Vitti cautioned the Board that putting uncontested expulsions on Consent could possibly cause the student's parent(s) to attend the Board meeting to make public comments that otherwise would be made in the setting of a hearing. It can create an awkwardness at the Board meeting that Dr. Vitti has seen in other districts. Different scenarios were discussed that may possibly streamline the process. Vice-Chairman Wright reminded everyone that these expulsion hearings deal with the educational careers of students and the Board needs to take care not to pass its work onto other parties. While the process may sometimes be time-consuming, it is still very important.

Board Member Shine noted only half the Board Members attended hearings last year. Chairman Smith Juarez explained that was why the process of establishing committee members ahead of time was initiated this year. Ms. Chastain will research how large districts and surrounding districts handle their expulsions and report back.

LEGAL SERVICES

Minutes:

Ms. Chastain used the PowerPoint presentation (see attached) to give historical and background information on the Legal Services Department within the district.

The gap analysis reviewed the department's strengths, weaknesses,

opportunities, and threats. Through Next Steps, recommendations were made along with a comparison chart showing how the legal departments in other districts are organized. Charts were reviewed that show the increase/decrease of work volume in different categories over the past few years. Having in-house legal services increases efficiency and expertise in legal matters as they relate to education. Charts analyzing services from Office of General Counsel (OGC) were also reviewed.

Discussion following the PowerPoint presentation included the following:

- Legal needs of the district are different than legal needs of the Board.
- Moving Ms. Chastain over from OGC to the district left a vacancy for Board representation that was never really filled.
- The Charter forces the Board to use OGC for counsel but there is no accountability that is in place.
- The PowerPoint presentation needs to include data showing the drastic increase in education laws that have occurred at both the state and federal level since 1968, then presented to the Mayor's staff since the Mayor is able to make appointments.

ACADEMICS & CURRICULUM

Minutes:

After Dr. Vitti reviewed the data in the PowerPoint presentation, there was discussion that included the following:

- Middle school students scoring 3 or above in math would take advanced classes (Algebra I).
- Coaches would be put into schools with struggling students and professional development on a district wide basis would be available to other schools via televised courses.
- Board Member Hall asked for the raw number in percentages of how far away a school is from the next grade up as well as the data for 6th grade students at Pickett Elementary.
- How iReady scores compare to Achieve scores; iReady seems to be a bit more accurate.
- Once Value Added Model (VAM) scores are available, they will give a comparison of teacher performance as it pertains to student achievement along with other needed data. Vice-Chairman Wright passed out a form showing the type of comparison data she would like to see. See attached.
- If learning gains would have been applied, the "F" schools would have looked better.
- The state is using 2013-2014 data two years in a row for high school data. Our district's data for 2014-2015 is better than 2013-2014 but it won't be used.

Dr. Vitti reviewed the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and explained the differences and similarities between that and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) it replaces. The new law requires reporting of data that the NCLB didn't require.

Dr. Vitti reviewed the instructional materials adoption process. After going through the review process, the committee recommended Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: Collections and the Public Consultant Group (PCG) Paths to College and Career. The cost to the district would be approximately \$5 million.

Discussion following the review included:

- Accuracy of the materials
- Packaging of the materials
- The amount of preplanning required
- What each package costs and what it includes
- Teachers possibly struggling with the materials
- Disclosure that curriculum reviewed is part of EngageNY
- Supplementation of curriculum selected
- Accuracy of review data

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Minutes:

Prior to reviewing the Emergency Preparedness item, Chairman Smith Juarez explained to the Board that since this topic has confidential aspects to it, some of the questions, by law, are permitted to be discussed outside of Sunshine requirements. Since it is possible the Board may ask questions that fall within the confidential realm, Chief Edwards may prefer to answer them after the meeting is adjourned during a closed meeting or on a one-on-one basis.

Lt. Wayne Clark, Emergency Management Coordinator, School Police, explained to the Board how the School Police determined the preparedness of our schools for emergency situations through Code Red and Intruder drills. Results of each drill are provided to principals, weaknesses are identified, and steps taken for improvement are implemented. The District Emergency Preparedness manual has been updated and is now available electronically to the principals. Dr. Vitti explained some of the recent improvements that have been done in the plan which includes intruder drills, addition of DECON radios in the schools to make communication during emergencies more consistent, and closer relationships are developed between School Resource Officers and students.

Prior to questions being answered, Ms. Chastain reminded everyone of the importance of not revealing confidential information in a public forum as it

pertains to security measures.

The following topics were discussed:

- When and how parents are notified of Code Red lockdowns
- Board Members being trained
- Uniforms on the students helping with proper identification

Given the lateness of the time, Board Members wishing to receive information of a sensitive nature will request a one-on-one meeting with School Police.

Adjournment

ADJOURNMENT

Minutes:

The meeting was adjourned at 3:59 p.m.

LBL/NS

Superintendent

Chairman